**Sun on prescription**

**Researchers are challenging public health organisations, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) to issue specific recommendations as to how long people should stay out in the sun. These recommendations should take the beneficiary properties of sunlight into consideration but at the same time, of course, be within safe limits.**

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), which is part of the WHO, recommends avoiding outdoor activities during the midday period. At the same time, we should all wear clothes that cover our bodies, and apply sunscreen every day to those parts of our bodies that are normally exposed to the sun. These are just some of the numerous recommendations issued by public health organisations, all with basically the same goal: to ensure fewer people contract skin cancer and to protect their health.

However, these recommendations ignore the fact that we humans have adjusted physiologically over time to protecting our skin from the sun. At the same time, sufficiently strong sunlight protects against several types of cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and other diseases. The benefits of UV radiation extend beyond the production of vitamin D.

Ultimately, calls to "stay out of the sun" do more harm than good, and provoke fear among people. Which is why Carole Baggerly and her team of researchers are demanding that health organisations issue recommendations that take the benefits of UV radiation into consideration, as well.

"We are still nowhere near "sun on prescription", but "sun on recommendation" would already be a step in the right direction. After all, we need sunlight, and it is quite simply wrong to fuel fear of the sun. As with so many other things, the right way is to indulge in moderation", explains Christina Lorenz, Chairman of the European Sunlight Association (ESA).

**Source:** Carole A. Baggerly BA, Raphael E. Cuomo MPH, Christine B. French MS, Cedric F. Garland DrPH, FACE, Edward D. Gorham PhD, William B. Grant PhD, Robert P. Heaney MD, Michael F. Holick MD, PhD, Bruce W. Hollis PhD, Sharon L. McDonnell MPH, Mary Pittaway MA, RD, Paul Seaton MS, Carol L. Wagner MD & Alexander Wunsch MD (2015): **Sunlight and Vitamin D: Necessary for Public Health**, Journal of the American College of Nutrition, DOI: 10.1080/07315724.2015.1039866

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